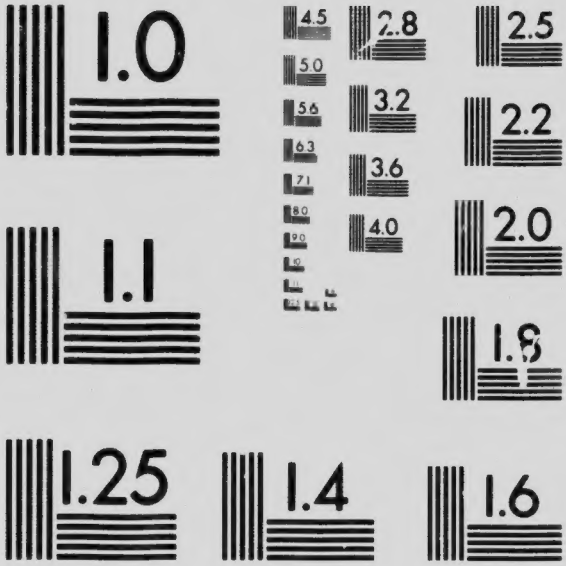

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MISSIONARY ORGANIZATION IN THE PARISH

BY

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Missionary Organization in the Parish

I. The Motive

The basis of all effective missionary work must be a right conception of the work itself, i.e., a right conception of the advent of our Lord to the world, and of the office of His Gospel and His Church. The simple scriptural view is that man is a sinful being, and, by reason of his sinfulness, is at enmity with God; that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; and that He has instituted in His Church a ministry of reconciliation. It follows from this that God's love extends to all mankind; that Christ's redemption is meant for all mankind; and that the Church is the agent ordained of God to convey its blessings to all mankind. It is therefore the duty of the members of the Church to make this redemption known to all the world.

To put the question in a nut-shell :— The world needs a Saviour, "All have sinned," Rom. III : 23 ; Christ supplied that need, "He died for all," 2 Cor. v. : 15 ; all men should know this, "How shall they hear without a preacher," Rom. x.: 14 ; it is our duty to tell them, "Go ye into all the world," St. Mark xvi. : 15.

II. Church Members Missionaries

It follows from this that the Church is essentially a missionary organization, instituted for a missionary purpose. All its members are in some sense missionaries, called either to go or to send representatives into all the world. The work of missions is the work of the laity as well as of the clergy. It is in fact the chief business and duty of both. The clergy themselves are recruited from the laity ; the Mission Field is calling for laymen, as well as ordained men; and there are portions of the work which laymen alone can do, or can do better than the clergy, viz. : the providing of means without which the work cannot be prosecuted and the bringing of invaluable and much needed business talents, experience, and

methods to bear on this greatest of all undertakings—the evangelization of the world.

III. A Missionary Minded Clergy

The first and most important requisite therefore is that the clergy should be endowed with a missionary spirit. They are the accredited representatives of the Church and should embody its highest ideals in their life and doctrine. Missionary work represents, on a world-wide scale, the glory of God, the interests of the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, the salvation of souls, i.e., to the very objects to which they have devoted their lives. It is futile to expect that the people will rise to their missionary obligations unless their clergy lead the way. The Scriptural proverb "like people like priest" is not more true than its reverse, "like priest like people." He should take care that his part is faithfully carried out by the diligent use of the Epiphany and Ascensiontide Appeals, by the zealous promotion of the Children's Lenten Offering and by the frequent introduction of missionary sermons and addresses. And let no clergyman be de-

terred from his duty in this matter by the fear that his parochial interests will suffer. The surest and best way to secure support for local needs is by enlarging the outlook and sympathies of the people. Reason teaches that the purse strings will be unloosed when the heart is opened and the zeal inflamed ; and experience reinforces that teaching by showing that the warmest supporters of Missions are those who can best be relied on to support parochial and diocesan objects.

IV. Need of Organization

But in order successfully to call forth the resources of the faithful, when once they have been aroused to see their duty, organization becomes an imperative need. By organization a multitude becomes an army, powerful for offensive or defensive purposes; without it a multitude is merely a crowd, a mob, powerful only for purposes of destruction and evil. If any great end is to be achieved some well defined object must be placed before them ; some definite direction must be given to their interest and their energies ; some general plan must be

wrought out that will call forth abundantly their gifts and their services ; some means must be devised that will focus the energies and resources of all.

V. Our Weak Point.

Now M.S.C.C. represents the whole Canadian Church, organized to do missionary work. Its Legislative Body, the General Synod, represents the whole Church; its Executive Body, the Board of Management, is composed of all the Bishops and delegates from all the Dioceses in the Church; its funds are raised by means of apportionments levied evenly from the whole Church ; its missionaries go forth in the name of, and are supported by, the whole Church. But M.S.C.C., from the nature of the case, must look upon the Diocese as the unit, and cannot go beyond the Diocese to organize its work in the parish ; and yet it is manifest that the systematic raising of money is a work that can only be done in the Parish. Parochial organization on behalf of Missions properly belongs to the parochial and diocesan authorities ; and, for some reason, no uni-

form organization of any kind has been adopted by the Parishes, as a whole.

VI. A Missionary Committee

As the object in view is that Church members should assume that share of responsibility that properly belongs to them, and so relieve the clergy of a large part of the financial burden that has so long rested almost entirely on them, organization of some sort in the Parish, under the general supervision and direction of the Incumbent, becomes a matter of urgent necessity. That organization should take the simple form of a Missionary Committee, to consist of from three to a dozen members according to the size of the Parish. There should be a chairman and a secretary; and sub-committees may be formed to look after special departments of the work. The members should be chosen from those who take a deep interest in Missions and are willing to exert themselves on their behalf and should represent the congregation, the young people and the Sunday School. Meetings should be held at stated times, and to the Missionary Committee

should be referred all matters in the Parish that properly relate to the subject of Missions.

VII. Method of Giving

Method in itself is desirable as having the effect of producing the greatest results in the easiest way. Some earnest Christian people give a tenth of their incomes; others maintain that we should give at least a tenth and as much more as we can afford. Without laying down any hard and fast rule it may at least be said that proportionate giving in some form is to be highly commended; and even in the simple matter of giving there are many objects to be aimed at—the largest possible sum of money—the easiest possible way of obtaining that money—the formation of the habit of giving—constant interest in the object—and constant prayer on its behalf. What simple method will enable us to obtain all these desirable ends? Surely the weekly offering for Missions. Small sums given frequently and regularly yield the largest amount; people part with their money most easily when they give in small sums; a habit is the result of

the frequent and constant repetition of the same act; and we take the greatest interest in and pray most frequently and most earnestly for that which is constantly in our thoughts. As the envelope system has been widely adopted and with the most satisfactory results for the support of local ministrations, why should not the same method be used with the same beneficial result for the support of the wider work of the Church? Envelopes of a different colour, or duplex envelopes perforated down the centre, may be used for the double offering for local and general purposes. Experience teaches that men will give almost as much weekly as they give quarterly, and so a much larger sum is obtained at the end of the year. The giving of large sums at long intervals—spasmodic giving—involves the experience of what has been called a "spasm," which is always painful though seldom dangerous. The frequent giving of small sums produces larger results and obviates that painful and forbidding experience. This method clearly has the sanction of common sense and experience; it has higher sanction still; "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of

you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." 1 Cor. xvi. : 2.

VIII. General Giving

As missionary work is the general work of the Church it is essentially the work of all its members. It does not devolve on the rich, the generous or heads of families only, it devolves equally on all. Every member of the Church should be given an opportunity of showing his interest in its work by contributing to its support. The Parish should be parcelled out among the members of the Missionary Committee either geographically or in lists of possible subscribers. Care should be taken that each person is approached by the most suitable collector. Canvassing in pairs is a good practical method ; it gives dignity to the proceeding, impresses the person visited, and secures the largest contribution. The co-operation of earnest women can be secured for the canvass of the women of the congregation. The children can best be reached through the Sunday School ; though the department, like all the rest, should be under the general supervision of the Missionary Committee.

The men of the congregation, however, should be visited by the members of the committee. No one should be omitted, even the humblest. The poor widow should not be forbidden the blessing of the Lord's commendation and of becoming a shining and permanent example to the whole Church. "Many mickles make a muckle" ; but the smallest benefit to be derived from the method of weekly contribution is the large sum it is calculated to produce. Much more important is the fact that the children in our families would thereby be trained to look upon themselves as helpers and supporters, not as recipients and dependents ; and the spirit of enthusiasm, unity and self-sacrifice would be made to pervade the rank and file of the congregation. This also has the sanction of common sense and experience ; but it has the higher sanction as well, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you."

IX. Educational

People will give only in proportion to the amount of interest they take in the object they are asked

to give to ; and their interest will be in proportion to the amount of information they have regarding it. They may give largely once, on the spur of the moment, under the impulse of some strong appeal ; but they will only get into the habit of giving from a rational interest based on ample knowledge. The greatest need of the Church to-day is more general, more accurate, more ample information regarding the obligation, the opportunities, the problems, and the necessities of the missionary enterprise. To meet this need a wide and vigorous campaign of education must be carried out. The annual missionary sermon, to be followed by the "spasm" of an annual collection, is entirely out of date. Archbishop Temple used to urge his clergy to preach at least twenty missionary sermons a year. It may even be maintained that every sermon should have a missionary outlook and application. A frequent missionary sermon, entirely apart from the idea of a collection, is imposed on the clergy by the urgency of the missionary question and by the vastness and variety of the missionary problem. The Missionary Committee can do

much to support the clergy in this matter. It can organize periodical missionary meetings to be addressed by returned missionaries or competent laymen; it can see that missionary addresses are frequently given to the Sunday School; it can secure suitable missionary books for the Sunday School and Parish library; it can take steps to place the New Era and other missionary literature in the hands of the people; it can encourage and promote Mission Study Classes; it can even train some of its members, especially young men, to become advocates of the missionary cause; it can secure a wider recognition of the truth that we are stewards, not owners, and of the practice of proportionate as well as systematic giving; and above all it can extend to men the call of God for the offering of life as well as substance, and provide all the agents and the support needed for the work, both at home and abroad. And so, under the blessing of God, it can bring the Church one step nearer the realization of the Divine ideal of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people"; and of the Divine vision, "The earth

shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," Is. xi.: 9. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xi. : 15.

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For further information apply to Rev. Canon Tucker, General Secretary, 229 Confederation Life Building, Toronto.